

26 Jun 45

I FOLDER # 115

Detailed Interrogation Report

THE GERMAN SIGNAL CORPS

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26 Jun 45

THE GERMAN SIGNAL CORPSI. SOURCE

Name : GRUBE, Willy
 Rank : Oberst
 Unit : NACHRICHTENTRUPPENFUEHRER
 BEIM ARMEESTAB "BLUMENTRITT"
 Captured : 10 May 45, at REIMS (Surrender Conference)
 Interrogated : 6824 DIC (MIS), Jun 45

II. PREAMBLE

This is the second in a series of reports by this PW on the German Signal System (See 6824 DIC (MIS)/M.1177).

Since the German Signal Corps was thoroughly reorganized within the past two years, mainly because of a shortage of experienced and well-trained personnel, the topics covered in this report have been subdivided into three major periods. The first period concerns itself with the peace-time organization of the German Signal Corps before Sep 39. The second period deals with war-time organization from Sep 39 to 43. The third period covers the time after 43, up to 8 May 45. This latter phase is a comparison, since reorganizations within the German Signal Corps were essential, due to the change from offensive to defensive and the slow but steady disintegration of the German Army as a whole.

Each of the above periods is further subdivided into two major parts, one dealing with the German Army, the other with the Air Force. These branches of the Armed Forces were under separate command, and signal organization in each varied because of different needs and purposes. This was especially true of the technical departments.

PW's knowledge of the Army Signal Corps is more detailed than that of the Air Force.

The information contained in this report was compiled in answer to a request by Technical Liaison Division, Office of the Chief Signal Officer, ETOUSA. The questionnaire for the interrogation was received from War Department, Office of the Chief Signal Officer.

Reliability : A-2

III. GENERAL ORGANIZATIONA. Before Sep 391. Army

The Army Signal Corps was subdivided into two main categories, the "NACHRICHTENTRUPPE" (Signal Corps) and the "TRUPPEN-NACHRICHTENVERBAENDE" (Unit Communication Personnel). The NACHRICHTENTRUPPE encompassed all signal units which operated independently, and contained only Signal Corps personnel, distinguished by yellow piping on their shoulder straps. The TRUPPEN-NACHRICHTENVERBAENDE consisted of infantry, artillery, engineer and other unit personnel, especially trained in communications for their respective branch of service and distinguished by a lightning flash in the color of their branch, worn on the left lower sleeve.

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The Signal Corps units were employed from Division up, while unit communication personnel maintained communications within their own units, establishing these from the higher unit to the lower, and to the adjacent unit on the right.

In peace-time, a Corps Signal Bn (KORPS-NACHRICHTEN-ABTEILUNG) was assigned to each Corps, and a Division Signal Bn (DIVISIONS-NACHRICHTEN-ABTEILUNG) to each Division. Each WEHRKREIS, which was solely responsible for the maintenance of these organizations and for the supply of personnel and equipment, also had a so-called FUNK-HORCH-KOMPANIE (Radio Monitoring Co). Signal Regiments were nonexistent in the peace-time organization. Shortly before the outbreak of the war, each WEHRKREIS was ordered to organize cadre signal battalions, which were to be employed as pools for the training of signal personnel for future signal regiments. Personnel for this purpose was pooled from existing signal units and was organized into battalions of four companies, each company having a specific mission in training recruits for various signal specialities. Consequently each battalion had a telephone company, a radio company, a construction company and a radio monitoring company. The cadres of these companies were specialists in their respective fields, and employed as instructors. All personnel emanating from these replacement and training battalions belonged to the Signal Corps.

At the HEERES-NACHRICHTENSCHULE at HALLE, a special unit known as the NACHRICHTEN-LEHR-UND-VERSUCHSABTEILUNG (Signal Training and Experimental Bn) was organized, whose task was to train signal specialists in the following fields:

- Telephone (maintenance personnel only).
- Radio (repair and maintenance personnel only).
- Construction (cable and wire).
- Radio Monitoring (various language courses and technical training).

Signal specialists with previous experience, such as radio and electronics engineers and research personnel, were organized by the OKH, WAFFENAMT, PRUEF 7, into a technical research platoon. In peace-time this platoon had a strength of approx 80 men.

Communication personnel in the Infantry, Artillery, Engineers, etc., were especially selected by their Commanding Officers for their civilian experience and aptitude for signal work. These men were sent to the various WEHRKREIS signal training battalions on detached service. There they received their signal training. After completion of the course at these schools, they returned to their original branch of service, to be employed as communication personnel.

2. Air Force

Large Air Force units had their own signal battalions to maintain communications with the Air Ministry. Radio operators on aircraft were not considered signal troops, but were classified as flying personnel. The peace-time organization of the Air Force Signal Corps was extremely small. A single Air Force training unit was located at the

LUFT-NACHRICHTEN-SCHULE at HALLE, and was known as the LUFT-NACHRICHTEN-LEHR-UND-VERSUCHS-ABTEILUNG, (Air Signal Training and Experimental Bn).

B. 1939 to 1943

1. Army

At the start of the present war, after ^{the} complete mobilization order had been released, all Division Signal Bns employed as pools and

enlarged into two or three battalions. The cadre for the newly activated units was drawn from the original Division Signal Bn. This was also true of Corps Signal Bn, since with the activation of new divisions, additional Corps Hq were set up. After the organization of Armies and Army Groups, the Corps Signal Bns were enlarged, assigned to Army or Army Group Hq, and from then on known as ^{ARMY}Signal Regiments (ARMBE-NACHRICHTEN-REGIMENTENTER) and Army Group Signal Regiments (HEERESGRUPPEN-NACHRICHTEN-REGIMENTENTER).

When the German Army attacked POLAND, the following war-time organization of the Signal Corps was in effect:

- a) Army Group : One Army Group Signal Regiment for maintenance of communications with the various Armies, and to the rear up to the German border.
- b) Army : One Army Signal Regiment, for maintenance of communications with Corps Hq.
- c) Corps : One Signal Bn, for maintenance of communications with Division Hq.
- d) Division : One Division Signal Bn, for maintenance of communications with Regimental Hq.

The organization of unit communication personnel (TRUPPEN-NACHRICHTEN-VERBAENDE) was not altered; it was merely enlarged to fit war-time needs.

The organization of the German Signal Corps below Army Group was not changed during the war. However, units whose task it was to maintain communications between Army Groups were altered. Shortly after the campaign against FRANCE began, the 40 FUEHRUNGS-NACHRICHTEN-REGIMENT (Armed Forces Signal Regiment, Command) was organized from 40 Signal Bn, to maintain Communications between Army Groups in the East and those massed in the West. This new addition relieved Army Group Signal Regiments of this task.

When the Russian campaign began, other Armed Forces Signal Regiments, Command were organized, some of which were designated "z.b.V." (ZU BESONDERER VERWENDUNG - for special employment). These units were in charge of special Carrier Frequency Companies and Construction Companies, whose task it was to build the main axis of communication in RUSSIA. This was essential, because of the great distances covered by the first onslaught of the German Armies. The communication network maintained by these special units went from Army Groups to the German border, traversing all of POLAND. After the organization of the above mentioned FUEHRUNGS-NACHRICHTEN-REGIMENT z.b.V., 40 FUEHRUNGS-NACHRICHTEN-REGIMENT was assigned to the Fuehrer's Headquarters, and entrusted with all telephone, teletype and radio communications emanating from there.

During the second year of the Russian campaign, some of the Army and Army Group Signal Regiments were assigned new Decimeter Companies later known as DEZIMETER RICHT-VERBINDUNG KOMPANIEN (Decimeter Directional Communication Companies). These were only in the experimental stage, and were to test new decimeter equipment.

Newly organized EISENBAHN-NACHRICHTEN-REGIMENTENTER (Railway Signal Regiments) were also put in use in RUSSIA. Their task was to maintain communications between Army Groups. The reason for their use was the great distance between individual Army Groups.

Two Long Distance Cable Construction Bns (FERNKABEL-BAU-ABTEILUNGEN) were activated at the beginning of the Russian campaign. These constructed all U-Cable lines (the U-Cable is buried in the earth and has 64 channels). The longest lines constructed by these battalions

2. Air Force

The Air Force maintained its own communication axis and network during this period. They organized LUFT-NACHRICHTEN-REGIMENTER (Air Signal Regiments) whose task it was to maintain communications between the LUFTFLOTTE KOMMANDOS (Air Force Hqs) and the FLIEGER KORPS (Air Force Corps). Other Air Force Signal units maintained communications between individual lower units.

C. 1943 to 8 May 45

1. Army

The organization of the Signal Corps did not change. The only changes that occurred were in unit strengths, since non-essential personnel were to be converted to combat troops. Because of this, the German Signal Corps completely lost its previous effectiveness. The personnel retained were specialists in carrier frequency technique, and telegraph, decimeter, and radio monitoring personnel; all others were transferred to the combat units. During Winter 43, WEHRMACHT NACHRICHTEN-REGIMENTER (Armed Forces Signal Regiments, Strategic) were organized from personnel of dissolved Army, Navy and Air Force Signal units. After heavy bombing raids completely destroyed the German communication network, especially in the RUHR area, these regiments were placed in the bombed-out areas to rebuild and maintain the communication network. For example, WEHRMACHT NACHRICHTEN-REGIMENT RUHR consisted of a Army Signal Bn, an Air Force Signal Co, and a Navy Radio Co. RR Signal Regiments were also reactivated in the bombed-out areas, their personnel being drawn from decimated or dissolved signal units of the Army, Navy and Air Force. Their task was to repair and rebuild the railway communications system which had been almost completely destroyed by Allied air raids.

Due to the shortage of trained signal personnel, Division Signal Bns were maintained in name only. Actually, each division had only a Signal Co to maintain communications. Since the fronts were shrinking in size, practically all FUEHRUNGS-NACHRICHTEN-REGIMENTER were dissolved, and their personnel re-assigned to newly activated signal units.

2. Air Force

Similar changes occurred in the Air Force. Details are not known to PW.

IV. TECHNICAL DEPARTMENTS OF THE SIGNAL CORPS

A. Army

There are no special technical departments in the Army Signal Corps. The development of sets, which was conducted with great intensity and success, emanated from the OKH, HEERESWAFFENAMT, ABTEILUNG PRUEF 7 in close liaison with INSPEKTION DER NACHRICHTEN-TRUPPEN, FU 7. These two departments left all research work to VERSUCHS-ZUG DER PRUEF 7 (Experimental Platoon), which conducted all the main experiments and research in conjunction with the NACHRICHTEN-LEHR-UND-VERSUCHS-ABTEILUNG DER HEERES-NACHRICHTEN-SCHULE HALLE (Signal Training and Experimental Bn Army Signal School Halle). Occasionally certain Signal battalions, known to have sufficient training with particular equipment, were also given the task of conducting research and experiments.

Each year, the General Staff conducted maneuvers on a large scale, during which all new developments, technical and otherwise, were demonstrated for the benefit of the General Staff Corps. All new signal developments were employed in the actual organizational frame for which they were intended, thus showing their usefulness and practicability in

On the average, all officers, NCOs and men had only the barest essentials of technical training during peace-time. Some of the officers in more responsible positions had technical training and schooling and were certificated engineers. Members of the 100,000-man Army active in the Signal Corps were all highly trained technical specialists, since they were intended as instructors for the future Army. At each AUSBILDUNGSSTAB (Training Hq) there was a "technical employee" and a BAURAT (Construction Advisor), specialists in their respective fields. At the various Signal Cos there was one or more FUNKMEISTER (Radio Sgt), whose task it was to train all new personnel. They too were considered experts in their respective fields. Beginning 39, a large number of officers and NCOs were sent to various experimental stations of PRUEF 7, where they received an intensive course in "Special Equipment" (carrier frequency, telegraph, teletype, etc.). After the completion of their courses, they returned to their units and were employed as instructors. After the outbreak of war, this method was continued. During Winter 42, 50 Signal Bn was organized at FLENSBURG. Here carrier frequency and decimeter specialists were trained as mechanics and operators.

B. Air Force

A procedure closely resembling that of the Army was employed by the Air Force, although it was completely separated from all ground force activities. From 42 on, special emphasis was placed on the training of technical specialists in the decimeter and radar fields.

V. ORGANIZATION OF SIGNAL UNITS

A. Before 1939

1. Army

a. Division Signal Bn (Infantry Division)

Average strength : 50 officers and EM.

i) Bn Hq

Bn Commander (Lt Colonel or Major)
Adjutant (1st or 2nd Lt)
Staff Officer (HAUPTMANN BEIM STABE) (Major or Captain)
Surgeon
Technical Advisor (Inspector or Chief Inspector)
(usually equivalent to Captain)
Inspector of electrical and mtz equipment (BAURAT)
(Usually equivalent to 1st Lt)
1 or 2 Radio Sgts (FUNKMEISTER)
Motor Sgt (SCHIRRMESTER)
Veterinary Officer (in charge of all animals)
Clerks, cooks, stable boys, drivers, messengers, and orderlies.

Bn Hq also had a Repair Section (WERKSTATT STAFFEL) equipped with a repair truck; this section repaired all damaged signal equipment.

ii) Telephone Co

CO (Captain)
3 - 4 Platoon leaders (1st or 2nd Lt)

The company had three platoons of four motorized construction and operation squads, and one platoon of three or four horse-drawn construction squads. Each squad consisted of one NCO and 8 to 10 EM.

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The motorized squads had one personnel car and one 2½ Ton supply truck. The horse-drawn squads had one horse for the squad leader, and one wagon drawn by four horses.

Average strength of the company was 200 to 220 officers and EM.

Each construction squad had approx 12 Kms of heavy field cable, two or three telephones, one 10-line switchboard, and construction equipment consisting of poles, anchors, axes, shovels, etc. Each operator squad had two 10-line switchboards (later two 20-line switchboards), ten to twelve field telephones, cable, construction equipment, and later two or three field teletype machines.

iii) Radio Co

CO (Captain)
3 - 4 Platoon leaders (1st or 2nd Lt)

The company had three motorized platoons of three or four radio squads, one horse-drawn platoon of three radio squads, and one code squad (SCHLUESSELTRUPP).

Each radio squad consisted of one NCO and five or six EM, and was organized like the telephone squads above. The code squad operated only at Division Hq, and consisted of two NCOs and eight to ten EM.

Average strength of the company was 150 to 180 officers and EM.

There were three or four 100-watt two-way/^{sets} and three or four 5-watt sets (each of these was complete with earphones), 2 ENIGMA code machines, and an accumulator.

The code squad had additional ENIGMA code machines, a 10-line switchboard, telephones, construction equipment, and 3 or 4 Kms of field cable.

iv) Light Signal Column (LEICHTE NACHRICHTEN-KOLONNE)

This was the supply unit for the battalion, and consisted of five or six light trucks. In emergencies, these might be utilized for the transportation of battalion personnel.

b) Corps Signal Bn

The Corps Signal Bn consisted of a Hq, two Telephone Companies, and one Radio Company. The whole unit was motorized. The organization of the Hq was the same as that of the Division Signal Bn, with the exception that it had no Veterinary Officer.

The Telephone Companies consisted of twelve construction squads and two operator squads. Each construction squad was equipped with 8 to 10 Kms of heavy field cable, one personnel car, and two or three 2½ Ton trucks. Each operator squad had one or two 60-line switchboards, telephones, construction equipment, field teletype machines, and two to four carrier frequency sets, type A or B. Since cable was laid over great distances, repeaters had to be installed. For that reason a special repeater squad was included. It was equipped with one special truck carrying ten large repeaters for from two to four lines.

The Radio Company consisted of ten to twelve radio squads, of which one or two were heavy radio squads, and eight to ten were 100-

The unit also included a 3-Ton Signal Column consisting of eight or ten trucks which carried large cable drums.

The total strength of a Corps Signal Bn was approx 800 Officers and EM.

2. Air Force

The Air Force Signal Bns were similiar in organization to the Corps Signal Bn, with the exception that they were stronger in personnel, and more emphasis was placed on radio communication than on telephone and teletype. No further details are know to PW.

B. 1939 to 1943

1. Army

The organization and equipment of the Division and Corps Signal Bns remained as described above.

The newly organized Army and Army Group Signal Regiment consisted of a Regimental Hq and two or three battalions. One was the operator Bn and consisted of a Telephone Operator Co and a Radio Operator Co. The others were Construction Bns consisting of three or four companies each, with the task of constructing cable links and over-head communication lines. Each of these companies were subdivided into ten or twelve squads; all of them were motorized.

The Telephone Operator Co had two or three 60 to 150-line switchboards, and a number of construction squads for heavy field cable and wire construction, to build the communication network for Army Hq. It included a number of teletype squads, which were equipped with two teletype switchboards, and one or two telegraph sets, and two or three carrier frequency sets, type A or B.

The Radio Operator Co had ten to twelve heavy and medium radio sets (one per squad), and a code squad which was divided among the various stations, its standard equipment being the ENIGMA code machine.

The Telephone Construction Cos for heavy field cable were equipped like those of the Division Signal Bn. The Telephone Construction Cos for over-head lines consisted of ten to twelve construction squads and were equipped with approx 18 Kms of copper wire (2-3 mm) and telephone poles.

The strength of an Army Signal Regiment varied according to the area in which the unit was to be employed. The number of companies was raised or lowered. When the unit had six Cos its strength was approx 900 Officers and EM, when it consisted of twelve Cos, approx 1800 Officers and EM.

The Army Group Signal Regiment was usually stronger than that at Army.

The FUEHRUNGS NACHRICHTEN REGIMENTER and NACHRICHTEN REGIMENTER z.b.V. were similarly organized during the campaign in RUSSIA. The difference between them and the Army and Army Group Signal Regiments was that the FUEHRUNGS NACHRICHTEN REGIMENTER and NACHRICHTEN REGIMENTER z.b.V. had up to 20 companies, among which were special units such as carrier frequency companies, long distance heavy cable companies, Axis of Communication construction companies, etc. The carrier frequency sets used were large ones, for eight to fifteen channels. The AC telegraphy sets had up to twelve channels, and were employed on carrier frequency channels.

The above regiments could build a communication network over distances of 500 to 1000 Kms.

2. Air Force

At the start of this war, the Air Force organized Air Force Signal Regiments. These were identical with those in the Army. For the Russian Campaign, the Air Force adopted the carrier frequency technique of the Army and organized Air Force Signal Regiments for the construction and operation of carrier frequency networks. The organization of these were the same as in the Army. In GERMANY proper, the Air Force organized a number of signal regiments for the construction and operation of radar networks. These were known as SPEZIALREGIMENTER (Special Regiments).

VI CHAIN OF COMMAND

A. Before 1939

1. Army

All Divisional and Corps Signal Bns were directly sub-ordinated to Divisions and Corps. The highest echelon in the Signal Corps was the INSPEKTION DER NACHRICHTENTRUPPEN - IN 7 (Signal Corps Inspectorate) at the OKH. The Inspector General was General FELLGIEBEL, executed after 20 Jul 44; he was responsible for the supervision, organization, activation, training and equipment of signal troops. He was also responsible for the Signal officer corps, and made assignments in accordance with ability. Division and Corps Commanders were responsible for carrying out all inspections within their commands, and had to report all shortcomings to him.

2. Air Force

The chain of command in the Air Force was similar to that of the Army. All signal units were under the INSPEKTEUR DER LUFTNACHRICHTENTRUPPEN (Inspector of Air Force Signal Units), General MARTINI.

B. 1939 to 1943

1. Army

When the war started, IN 7 was revised into two major departments. One was responsible for the FELDHEER (Field Army) and the other for the ERSATZHEER (Replacement Army). For the Replacement Army, IN 7 remained in charge, while for the Field Army a new command was activated, known as CHEF DES HEERES-NACHRICHTEN-WESENS (CHEF HNW) (Chief of the Army Signal Branch). Shortly before this command was activated, the CHEF DER WEHRMACHT-NACHRICHTEN-VERBINDUNGEN (CHEF WNV) (Chief of Army Signal Communications) was instituted at the OKW. This was responsible for all Army administrative matters and conducted all technical developments in the Signal Corps. It worked in close liaison with the Signal Chiefs of each component of the Armed Forces, and the REICH authorities, whose offices were connected with the REICHSPPOST and REICHSDAHN.

The Division and Corps Signal Bns remained under Division and Corps supervision, as previously mentioned. The newly organized Signal Regiments assigned to Army Groups and Armies were directly under commanders of the larger units. The Army Groups and Armies had a Chief Signal Officer (HEERESGRUPPEN-NACHRICHTEN-FUEHRER), who belonged to the staff of the Army Group Commander or the Army Commander. The Chief Signal Officer was directly responsible to the Army Group or Army Commander, and in turn all subordinate signal commanders of the various units which were under his supervision were responsible to him, for administration only. He was subordinate to the CHEF HNW for all other purposes. As far as allotment of units was concerned, the individual Signal Regiment Commanders were

2. Air Force

After the start of the war, the chain of command within the Air Force was not changed.

C. 1943 to 8 May 45

1. Army

No great changes occurred in the Army chain of command during this period. Shortly before the end the CHEF WNV command at the OKW was eliminated and a new command was formed, known as the NACHRICHTEN-FUEHRER REICH (Chief Signal Officer of the REICH), which was responsible for all signal communications (Army and State alike) within GERMANY.

2. Air Force

Nothing known to PW.

VII. ACTIVATION OF SIGNAL UNITS

A. Before 1939

1. Army

All activations were carried out by the ORGANISATIONSBTEILUNG DES GENERALSTABES (Organizational Department of the General Staff) in conjunction with IN 7. Recruits without special qualifications were assigned by the individual WEHR-ERSATZ-INSPEKTIONEN (Defense Replacement Inspectorates) to the Army post at which the new unit was to be activated. Here, whenever possible, men with special aptitude for signal work were separated and assigned to specialist schools, while others, with lesser aptitude for the work involved, were placed in construction units. Only very much later was it possible to recruit signal specialists from various industries and from the REICHSPPOST; these were then given the privilege of choosing their fields.

The majority of the recruits, however, were chosen according to physical standards. In other words, all men able to carry out heavy work were assigned to construction units, while those with minor physical deficiencies were assigned to Signal Schools for specialist training.

Cadres for the newly activated units were drawn from already existing signal units. They were mostly Gefreite and Unteroffiziere, and were used as instructors. Six or eight weeks basic infantry training, however, were considered essential before any specialized training of the newly activated units was possible.

2. Air Force

Same as for the Army.

B. 1939 to 1943

1. Army

In the first year of the war, many new units were activated, all of them on the basis described in para VII-A-1, above. All expert personnel of the REICHSPPOST was made available to the Army and was on immediate call. As far as possible, however, technical personnel from industries and the REICHSPPOST were not called up for active service. They were employed at Army Research and Experimental stations, but retained their civilian status and were paid by their respective industries or government agency.

All technicians and specialists were given a specialized course by PRUEF 7 of the Signal School at HALLE, or by 50 Signal Bn at FLENSBURG. After they had passed these special courses, they were released and returned to their respective stations, or sent to experimental stations to conduct further research in their fields.

The training of general signal personnel for new units was conducted by the Signal Replacement and Training Bns of the Replacement Army.

2. Air Force

No details are known to PW.

C. 1943 to 8 May 45

1. Army

No recruits were drawn for the Signal Corps after early 1943. Newly activated signal units received personnel from already activated units; consequently, all units were slowly shrinking in size. Often Divisions which had been destroyed in RUSSIA or ITALY returned for re-organization to GERMANY or FRANCE. Their signal personnel, operating in rear areas, usually returned intact. These men were pooled and new Division Signal Bns were formed from these pools. Due to the lack of Infantry personnel, a large portion of the Signal personnel was turned over to the Infantry further reducing the strength.

2. Air Force

Most of the signal personnel of the Air Force was turned over to the Army, and assigned to the field as Infantry. As much radar personnel as possible was retained, however. Former Air Force Signal Regiments or lesser units, which had been completely immobilized due to the Allied supremacy in the air, furnished the Infantry replacements.

VIII. STRENGTH OF THE GERMAN SIGNAL CORPS

The only figures known to PW are for the period 1942-43.

A. Army : 300,000 officers and EM.

B. Air Force: 350,000 officers and EM.

These figures include all effective personnel in training and in the field.

IX. NACHRICHTENHELFERINNEN (Women's Auxiliary)

Only after the French Campaign were women employed as telephone and radio operators in the rear areas. All women who were drafted for such work originally served with the German Red Cross. They received their training in a number of HELFERINNEN-SCHULEN (Women's Auxiliary Schools), one of which was at GIESSEN/LAHN, where they were trained as switchboard and radio operators. Those with language qualifications were trained as radio monitors and translators.

The Air Force had approx 50,000 women in the aircraft warning service.

The use of women proved very successful. They were especially suitable for radio work.

ZJH (Ed: UEL)

FOR IVO V. GIANNINI, MAJOR
Commanding 6824 DIC (MIS)

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